

A Woman who Has Run the Gamut of Crime



May Churchill, Queen of Women Crooks



George Miller, a member of the Guerín-Churchill Gang

May Churchill, an Enigma to the Police of Four Nations

OF ALL the women crooks in the world, probably the most daring, the most ingenious, the most versatile, the most mysterious, is May Sharpe, sometimes known as May Churchill, and more widely known simply as Chicago May.

A year ago May Sharpe was reported as having died in prison in France, where she was serving a sentence for helping to rob the American Express Company in Paris of \$20,000. A few months later a clever, though unknown, woman assisted "Eddie" Guerín, imprisoned for complicity in the American Express robbery, to escape from his living tomb on Devil's Island.

Now from Rio Janeiro, Brazil comes the astonishing news that, infatuated with Mrs. May Churchill Sharpe, a charming American widow, a young Englishman of noble birth, upon being informed that she is none other than Chicago May, a week or so ago, committed suicide.

How, then, did May Sharpe escape from France? Does her name, like that of Guerín on Devil's Island, decorate the stone upon another's grave? And after all, was it not she who aided the daring Guerín in his remarkable flight from the penal rock in the sea?

ALTHOUGH her maiden name was Mary Vech, and her husband's name was Sharpe, "Chicago May" is best known as May Churchill. She has also been called at times May Fletcher, May Latimer, Katie Fitzgerald, May Guerín and May Miller. It was under the name of May Miller, wife of George

Eddie Guerín, whom May Churchill assisted in his escape from Devil's Island

Miller, that she was convicted and sent to prison in France four years ago for her share in the robbery of the American Express Company.

When Mrs. Leonard acknowledged that she had made an almost miraculous escape from that terrible penal station, once selected as a living tomb for Captain Dreyfus.

When it was reported that May Churchill—bold,

dashing and resourceful "Chicago May"—had succumbed to the terrors of French prison life, most of her former friends and acquaintances accepted the report as true.

A few months ago a tall, slender-looking and handsome woman named from a prison steamship at Rio, Brazil, giving her name as Mrs. May Churchill Sharpe, the took up quarters at one of the best hotels.

Although she is now about 29 years of age, May Churchill appears much younger. Her method of life, her encounters with the police and her terms in prison have neither furrowed her blooming cheeks nor whitened the wonderful masses of her bronze-red hair.

Of good figure, she is a post-mistress of the art of effective dress. Her countenance is quietly elegant. Moreover, her manners are perfect, her speech that of a well-

educated, correctly bred woman. Always of magnetic presence, she seldom fails to bring her men acquaintances to her feet as warm admirers.

Perhaps her fascinating ways and her knowledge of human nature stood her in good stead after her arrival in Rio. In any event, the woman known there as May Sharpe made the acquaintance of many people of social consequence, among them a young Englishman of noble family, who was residing temporarily there.

Indeed, he is said to have become deeply smitten, and, after an ardent courtship, laid his honored name and his fortune at her feet. A few weeks ago, however, when he is said to have learned the unhappy truth about the woman who had gained his affections, he promptly shot himself.

If not really affected by the tragedy, Mrs. Sharpe pretended to be, and those who knew her in Rio were under the impression that she intended returning to the United States or England. It is not believed by the police, however, that May Churchill will soon venture into any country where the detective bureaus take such a lively interest in her career or whereabouts as they do here and in Great Britain.

A wanderer in many lands, practically expatriated from her own, Mary Vech was born in New York city, where her father, a German, was an East Side baker. During her girlhood she removed to Chicago, where she resided for a number of years. Then she was noticed in New York, a rather popular concert hall singer, who from that time on was known as "Chicago May."

Concert halls on Coney Island and the Bowery knew her well. So did "badger" men, the expert pick-pockets and swell crooks generally, for she associated with them almost from the first.

In time, she became one of the most expert women in the world at the "badger" game—that of turning men with money into places where they were blackmailed or robbed outright.

After a time, "Chicago May" added another side line to her activity as a crook. She became an enterprising shoplifter.

STOLE IN GREAT STYLE

Her favorite plan was to drive in great style up to a fashionable fur or drygoods store and in passing, instinctively, along the aisles, to sweep from the counters to the floor a number of articles of as great value as possible.

Then, while an accomplice engaged the attention of the salesman, she would attach the articles to hooks beneath her skirts, stroll nonchalantly out, get into her cab and drive off.

In spite of the notoriety that attached to her career, May Vech succeeded in escaping arrest until 1896, when one of her boldly planned and daringly executed "bagging" games brought her to grief.

After leaving this trouble behind, she concluded that a change of scene and air might prove beneficial and a new field of work more profitable. Consequently, she gracefully permitted London to make her acquaintance.

It was in 1901 that she sprang an entirely new game on the police of that city. It caused them to sit up and rub their eyes. In fact, it was not until a number of complaints, all giving similar details, had been turned into Scotland Yard that the authorities realized that they had a new woman crook of nerve and resourcefulness with whom to deal.

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SOME GREAT THINGS THAT GREW FROM SMALL BEGINNINGS

WHEN the haughty autocrat of Rome strove to impress upon his beatman the important fact that "this craft carries Caesar and all his fortunes," a small leak might have caused a ludicrous, if not tragic, situation.

How often the small things of life—trivial, insignificant in themselves—lead to overpowering results. A cigarette stump burned up millions of dollars worth of Baltimore property.

WHILE on the subject of fires, it is not out of place to mention the calamity that nearly overtook Dresden, Tenn., not long ago.

One Perry, a restaurant clerk, went to his room about 11 o'clock and lit a lamp. The oil in the vessel caught fire, and Perry promptly threw the whole thing into the street.

Now it happened that a town hog was peacefully rooting the ground beneath the window, and the blazing lamp landed squarely on its back. The lamp was broken, the oil, fiercely burning, spread over the hog, and that astonished animal, with loud squeals of protest, promptly set out on a tour of the surrounding section. He awakened to the situation.

Taking a rapid turn around part of the public square, the hog returned to the place where he had been assaulted and crawled under the building. Soon the restaurant structure was ablaze and the entire fire-fighting force of the town was called out. For a time it seemed that the whole of the east side of the town was doomed.

Finally, however, the blaze was conquered, after the floor of the restaurant had been torn up to get at the incendiary porker. The loss was covered by insurance, but this did not assuage the blistering pain in the hog's back.

George Adams, of Waterbury, Conn., was fatally wounded by a woodchuck. This animal is not regarded as ferocious, but the particular woodchuck that Adams encountered fired a rifle bullet into the man's stomach.

Adams was in Middleburg on business, and at night went with others in pursuit of an animal that had burrowed near the barn of Clifford Barnum. The men poured bucket after bucket of water into the hole, and soon the little animal, gasping for breath, appeared at the entrance.

When Adams tried to push the woodchuck back under the water with the butt of his rifle the animal struck out with its paws, seized the trigger and discharged the weapon.

The bullet entered the man's stomach, causing a wound from which he died the next day. In the excitement following the shooting the woodchuck escaped.

The expenditure of six cents without her husband's approval, it is asserted, caused an attack by him upon Mrs. William Leonard, of Paterson, N. J. She was



taken to a hospital in a precarious condition, while the man was arrested, charged with beating her viciously with an axe handle.

According to the story told the police by a young son of Leonard, the man became furious when he missed six cents which he had left in the house.

When Mrs. Leonard acknowledged that she had spent the money, the boy said, his father attacked her as she stood with a month-old baby in her arms. He felled her with the axe handle and kicked her as she lay on the floor.

At the Jersey City terminal of the Central Railroad of New Jersey small boys plunde a an electric battery used in the signal system and tied up the entire line for forty minutes, to the great discomfort of thousands of commuters, who were eager to reach their suburban homes.

The urchins stole the zinc from batteries that operate the automatic signal switchings in the yard, and which, if sold, as the little purloiners intended, would have brought only about 20 cents.

Just at the busy time in the afternoon, when trains were being made up to carry home the thousands of commuters, the switching signals refused to work. In consequence, trains along the tracks were tied up automatically and the entire system thrown out of working order as far as Bound Brook. And all for some pieces of zinc and wire that would have netted the youthful plunderers only 20 cents.

Health and even life are frequently menaced by insignificant things. Only the other day, in Philadelphia, Alexander Alcorn put on a tight-fitting collar, sat down on a chair and dropped to sleep.

Some time later he was found dead—his high collar had choked him to death as he slept. The man was weak and the weight of his head over his sharp collar was sufficient to cause strangulation.

Bathers at the seashore frequently get sand in their ears, but suffer no ill consequences other than a temporary annoyance. Sand in his ear, however, caused

the death of Herbert Lawrence, a lifeguard at Atlantic City.

While making a rescue early in August, Lawrence had some sand driven into his ear by the force of the waves. It could not be removed by ordinary methods, so the guard went to a hospital and submitted to an operation.

This failed to relieve him, and an abscess formed in his head. Two other operations were performed, the third resulting fatally.

A common household caused Miss Mary Ryan, of Reno, Pa., to lose the sight of one eye. Only with difficulty was the other saved.

While proceeding about her household occupations one day during the summer a fly flew into Miss Ryan's eye, causing her excruciating pain. A physician applied appropriate remedies, but the eye continued to inflame. At last Miss Ryan was compelled to enter a hospital, where only extreme care enabled her to retain the sight of one of her eyes.

When Herman Winterfelt, of Fogelsville, Pa., goes fishing hereafter, he will not put a fishhook in his mouth or, if he does so, will be most careful to refrain from sneezing.

While overhauling his fishing tackle some time ago, preparatory to an expedition to a nearby pond, Winterfelt placed a hook, to which was attached several inches of line, into his mouth.

This would probably not have resulted in trouble if Winterfelt had not been overpowered by a desire to sneeze, and when he sneezed he swallowed the fishhook and line. After an operation, two physicians succeeded in removing the hook, and Winterfelt fortunately suffered no ill results.

BABE FIRES ITS CRIB

Little Millard Lamont, a 16-month-old baby of Chester, Pa., found a match in his crib at night, and in playing with it caused it to ignite. In a short time the bedclothing was on fire, and the child was severely burned about the face, arms and neck. Its screams aroused the mother, who was horrified to find her baby on fire, and who extinguished the flames with a rug.

Dr. C. W. Wilson, of Montreal, might have thought the mere stealing of a kiss a trivial matter, yet, according to a dispatch from Toronto, that little indiscretion was responsible for a full sentence of seven days, imposed by the Judge of the Toronto police court.

The report stated that A. T. Severance, of New York, was sitting with his daughter in the rotunda of the King Edward Hotel, when Wilson slipped up behind the young lady, embraced her and kissed her.

Frequent attention is directed by the London Lancet, one of the world's leading medical journals, to the perils menacing health and life due to little things. Recently the paper sounded a warning against the joyous bridal cake.

The writer inveighs against the "disgusting and filthy practice of blowing icing and other sweet stuff on bride's cakes and other ornamental pastry by means of tubes applied to the lips of pastry cooks."

One case was cited by the writer of a pastry cook who followed this practice of icing cakes while he was suffering from a well-matured disease of the mouth and throat.